

PENNSYLVANIA SMARTWEED

Polygonum pensylvanicum L.
 plant symbol = POPE2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Robert H. Mohlbenbrock
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Uses

This plant is an excellent wildlife food plant, especially for waterfowl. Twenty species of ducks, geese, bobwhites, mourning doves, ring-necked pheasants, and four species of rails, as well as 30 nongame birds, eat the seeds. Dense stands provide cover for young waterfowl, marsh birds, and wintering pheasants. Plants and/or seeds are eaten by white-footed mice, muskrat, raccoons, and fox squirrels.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Knotweed Family (Polygonaceae). Pennsylvania smartweed is an annual herb that has small, five-parted

pink or rose colored flowers on a short spike. It grows 2 to 4(6) feet high. The flowering branches have stalked glands. The stems have a reddish color and swollen nodes. The alternate leaves have sheaths extending around the stems. The seeds are black, shiny, flattened, and almost round. There are approximately 62,000 seeds per pound.

Adaptation and Distribution

Pennsylvania smartweed is adapted to soils of all drainage classes except droughty soils. It commonly occurs on mudflats of fresh water to moderately brackish areas throughout the Northeast.

Pennsylvania smartweed is distributed throughout the entire United States, excluding a few northwestern states. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

A seedbed that reduces most weed competition and permits smartweed to be covered by one inch of soil depth is usually sufficient. Drop water quickly and broadcast seed on top of wet ground in mudflats or drawdown areas. Seed after the last killing frost in the spring. Smartweed may be seeded later so that seed maturity coincides with the arrival of migratory birds. Seeds are generally broadcast at a rate of 10-15 pounds per acre.

Management

As an upland wildlife food source, plant either in pure stands or in mixtures with other suitable and adapted species. For waterfowl food, draw down water where necessary shortly before planting. Do not re-flood until plants are at least 6 inches in height. Flood the area to a depth of 12-18 inches during the migratory season. Re-plant annually to assure a uniform stand. A light harrowing is recommended to encourage natural re-establishment of stands.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

No varieties exist, but common seed may be obtained through wildlife and game food seed dealers.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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